

Arson Project Report to NCN - March 13, 1980

1. Committee Members: We have lost a member, Joanne Jordan of the Roseville Coalition, whose CETA position ended. At the present time, Roseville will not be able to appoint a replacement, but will when their staffing situation permits. Yayi Maldonado of St. Columba's has joined the committee. In addition, 2 LSCRRC law interns have been assigned to NCN and will be doing some of the property research. The committee has met 3 times since the Febr. NCN meeting - on Febr. 21, Febr. 28 and March 6. The next meeting is Thursday, March 20 at 1 0'clock.
2. Outreach and Publicity: On March 10, Trisha and Rhonda Dent met with a group of tenants at 47 Branch Brook Place whose building has had several fires in the past year. They were referred to us by the East Orange Tenants Association. From talking to the tenants, it seems that the problem is one of vandalism or pyromania. The tenants decided on pursuing some measures with their landlord, while we agreed to get the fire records for them and to set up a meeting with the Arson Squad. We will be following up on this in the next two weeks.

Our letter to the editor in response to the Star-Ledger article of Febr. 4 was published in the "Newark This Week" section this past Monday, March 10. Trisha has also written a letter to the editor in response to the story in today's (3/13) Ledger about the 726 Broadway fire, in support of Chief Caulfield's statement about the ~~XXXXXX~~ municipal courts' laxity in enforcing fire and building codes. It will be interesting to see if the letter is run in the regular section or put into the "Newark This Week" section (assuming that it will be printed.) A copy of the letter is attached.

Trisha and Sister Debbie of St. Columba's appeared on the "WNJR Looks At" radio show with Chief Stoffers of the Arson Squad. The show was broadcast on Sunday, March 2. A tape of the show is available. Trisha also participated, along with other NCN staff and members, in a taping for WBGO radio, which was broadcast Monday, March 10. A tape is available. We also have a tape of the ABC "20-20" segment on arson for profit in Chicago, courtesy of Chris Vogel of Newark Media-works, which we would like to show at the next NCN meeting.

3. Research: We are continuing the fire tracking, and will begin the visual mapping of the fires next week. We are tracking the 1979 and 1980 arson fires from the Arson Squad's log book to get a detailed picture of the areas where arson is currently happening. It seems incumbent upon us to begin planning action/organizing to stop the fires that have, just since the beginning of this year, killed several people and displaced over 100 others.

We are compiling a list of landlords from the fire records and the current ownership records from the tax assessor's office, to see if there are any readily apparent patterns. We will, in the next month, begin the case studies on certain buildings and landlords. Next week, Alicia Bass (LSCRRC intern) will begin investigating the ownership records of certain landlords we already know about. Trisha and Dee Fujita of NTO met with Joe McGinley of the Inspections Office (code enforcement.) He was cooperative and gave us permission to use and copy their records.

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Ernie Garneau of UES/Boston will conduct a technical assistance workshop on setting up our total research design for the arson committee on April 10 and 11. There will be no cost since he is funded to do this. We will try to hold a general session for other community arson projects (CUE, E. Orange, Paterson.)

On March 10, Trisha met with Doug Brown of the Essex County Development Office. He has been meeting with the Essex County prosecutor, Bill Brown of the Office of Newark Studies and Chief Stoffers of the Newark Arson Squad about putting together a county-wide computerized arson study. The Office of Newark Studies has \$5,000 worth of computer time that must be used up by June. Doug agreed to recommend strongly that we be included in those meetings and in the planning of the study and, at the very least, have access to the study. We are also exploring other possibilities for access to computer time and technical assistance.

We have not yet gotten a meeting with Director Caulfield, but we are meeting with Chief Stoffers of the Arson Squad next week to discuss their research and our recommendations, our relationship with their project, etc.

4. UCPP and Victoria Grants: Both drafts will be completed by Monday. The Victoria proposal must be sent by March 21.